

Chapter **7** seven

Drinking, **Drugs & Driving**

The Affects of Alcohol

Alcohol is not digested. It passes through a person's stomach and small intestine directly into the bloodstream and then is carried to all parts of the body.

After two, three or four drinks, alcohol begins to impair reaction time, coordination and balance. Vision, and the ability to judge distance, is affected, making it more difficult to react and to drive safely.

In addition, studies have proven conclusively that a combination of alcohol and anger is responsible for much of the reckless, aggressive driving that can cause fatal highway accidents. While most alcohol-related accidents involve one vehicle, drinking and driving accidents often kill passengers, the driver or seriously injure others involved.

How Much is Too Much?

The only scientific way to check is through blood alcohol concentration, or BAC. A simple breath test will show a motorist's BAC.

BAC is determined by four factors: quantity of alcohol consumed, body weight, how quickly drinks were consumed, and food eaten.

The only way to reduce the risk of a crash caused by drinking and driving is not to drink and drive.

(An April 2004 state law made the refusal to submit to a breath test equivalent to driving with a BAC of .10% or higher for a first offense. The current penalty for both is the loss of driving privileges for between seven months and one year, to run concurrently or consecutively based upon a judge's order.)



In New Jersey it is illegal for a motorist 21 years or older with a BAC of .08 percent or higher to drive.

For motorists younger than 21, it is illegal to drive with a BAC of .01 percent or higher.

Remember, it doesn't matter what alcoholic beverage is consumed. There is just as much alcohol in the average beer as there is in the average drink of whiskey or wine. For example, 1 1/2 ounces of 86-proof whiskey, five ounces of table wine or 12 ounces of beer all contain the same amount of alcohol: About 1/2 ounce of alcohol per drink.

Studies show most motorists arrested for drinking and driving had been consuming beer.

Food slows the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream.

Heavy drinking will always produce a high BAC, regardless of the amount of food consumed. Eating does not make a motorist sober. Only time will. Arrange for a designated driver, use public transportation or call a cab.

Drinking and Driving

Alcohol affects decision making and slows motorists' reaction time.

Law enforcement is trained to notice certain telltale drinking and driving signs:

Speeding

A drinking driver often thinks high-speed driving is safe.

Weaving

Even though a driver may stay in the correct lane, driving straight may be a problem.

Slow Driving

A drinking driver may be overly cautious and drive more slowly than the normal flow of traffic.

Jerking Motion

A drinking driver often may have short mental lapses and not keep a steady speed on a clear road.

Quick stops

A drinking driver may make sudden stops at a traffic sign or light rather than easing up to it.

Drugs and Driving

It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on New Jersey roadways under the influence of any illegal drugs.

The labels on bottles of prescription drugs will describe common effects. Drugs that "may cause drowsiness or dizziness" should not be taken before driving. Ask a professional about how over-the-counter drugs may effect driving.

Never mix drugs without asking a medical professional about potential side effects. Always ask a medical professional how a drug may affect driving.

Alcohol should never be mixed with any drugs or medications.

If asked, motorists using prescription drugs must show proof of the prescription to law enforcement. If a motorist does not have a prescription for a drug, and one is necessary to obtain the drug, the drug will be considered illegal.

Aggression and Driving

New Jersey is waging a campaign of safety against "road rage."

Road Rage occurs when motorists lose their tempers, or become frustrated, because of a traffic disturbance. These aggressive drivers may run stop signs and red lights, speed, tailgate, weave through traffic, pass illegally on the right, make improper and unsafe lane changes, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk horns or flash high beams. In extreme cases, aggressive drivers may cause an accident.

New Jersey has specially trained enforcement patrols to help stop aggressive drivers.

Motorists may report aggressive driving by cellular phone at #77, or by telephone at (888) SAF-ROAD.

Study Questions

- 1

What is a habitual offender?
- 2

Motorists losing driving privileges for six months to a year for driving under the influence may also be imprisoned for up to 30 days, and be required to perform community service. What fines and fees does a motorist in this situation have to pay, if any?
- 3

Will lying on a license or registration application result in fine of between \$200 and \$500 and up to six months imprisonment?
- 4

Can motorists take each other's driver test? What can happen if this occurs?
- 5

Does New Jersey issue conditional or work driver licenses?
- 6

How often does MVC allow motorists to take a defensive driving course?
- 7

Name moving violation convictions that add five points to a driver history record.
- Questions continued on next page.

- 8

Are moving violations from other states added to motorists' driver history records?
- 9

What is a BAC?
- 10

At what BAC level is the risk of a motor vehicle accident increased by 25 times?

ANSWERS

1. A person with three license suspensions for violations that happened within three years and Rehabilitation Fund fee; \$1,000 per year insurance surcharge for three years; and, \$75

2. \$250 to \$500; \$75 per day IDR; fee; \$100 drunk driving fund fee; \$100 Alcohol Education

3. Yes

4. No. Fines up to \$500 and up to a 90-day jail term may apply

5. No

6. Once every five years

7. Speeding 30 mph or more above the legal limit; reckless driving; racing on highway; tailgating; passing a stopped school bus

8. Yes, under two Interstate Compacts

9. BAC is a scientific method that measures what how intoxicated a motorist is

10. .15 percent

• These study questions, or question similar to these study questions, may or may not be on the actual MVC knowledge test.